

President's Message – May 2017

Members of the University community,

Late last month, on April 22, the world once again came together to celebrate Earth Day. This annual event always gives me pause to reflect on what we are doing at the University of Regina to fulfill our commitment towards a sustainable campus and world. I am pleased to share with you some of the strides we have made towards that commitment.

Our commitment to sustainability is outlined in our strategic plan *peyak aski kikawinaw*, which fittingly means “We are one with Mother Earth.” As one of the plan’s overarching themes, sustainability is critical to the longevity and success of the University and our community. For us, sustainability not only refers to the environment, but also to economic, cultural and social sustainability.

Last year our sustainability enterprise took a leap forward with the unveiling of our Strategic Plan for Sustainability which lays out our vision for the future. Leadership, waste, energy, transportation, and communication and engagement are the plan’s five areas of focus. The plan emphasizes the imperative to put sustainability at the core of our teaching, research, and campus life.

Another initiative that reflects our dedication to sustainability is the President’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability (PACS). The committee oversees the University’s sustainability efforts and informs institutional decision making.

The University is also a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). This organization represents colleges and universities that are working to advance sustainability in higher education. By virtue of our membership, we all have access to AASHE’s online resources. The organization offers numerous opportunities for networking, information sharing, collaboration and professional development. You can view their website for more information.

Recently, the Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development in Saskatchewan handed out its 2017 Saskatchewan Sustainability Awards, several of which went to University of Regina initiatives. The Faculty of Arts received an award for its Certificate in Sustainability. Engineering and Applied Science faculty member Stephanie Young received awards for her projects Options for Reducing Wastewater Load in Small Saskatchewan Municipalities and Reclamation of Commercial Dishwasher Wastewater. The University’s Print Optimization Project 2.0 was also recognized in this year’s awards.

Incidentally, this marked the first year that RCE presented the Lyle Benko Future Generations Award. The award is given to a kindergarten to Grade 12 teacher or student for outstanding contributions to education for sustainable development in Saskatchewan. The award is named in memory of a long-time member of the Faculty of Education, Lyle Benko, who was a pioneer in sustainability in Saskatchewan.

One of the University's most recent sustainability initiatives was the brainchild of some of our Enactus students. Enactus Regina is the local chapter of an international organization that encourages students to develop and implement sustainable community empowerment projects and business ventures in communities around the world. The pilot project, in conjunction with Facilities Management, sees coffee grounds from campus food service providers collected each day and delivered to PV Waste Solutions. The grounds, when added in proper amounts to compost, are an excellent source of nitrogen. PV Waste Solutions uses the collected organic waste to produce compost which is available to Regina residents for applying to their yards and gardens.

Throughout the coming month, we have even more opportunities to reflect on our commitment to sustainability. May 13 is World Fair Trade Day, a day to support farmers and workers in developing countries. May 22 marks International Day for Biological Diversity, a day to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. This year's theme is Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism. And on May 9, the University will hold its second annual Campus Beautification Day. Please consider volunteering to help clean up the campus and refresh our grounds for the growing season.

We are so fortunate to be able to work and study in one of Regina's most beautiful locations. Let's do our part to ensure it stays that way.

Sincerely,

Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor